

. A web of cheerful words . . .
to catch happy thoughts

THE GOLDEN WEB

By **Wilhelmina Stitch**
Author of "Silken Threads," etc.

One great fascination of these little prose poems is that they make you think about yourself. They dare to proclaim the real worth of the virtues of life, and you find yourself asking, "Am I like that?"

E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.
300 Fourth Avenue

New York City



Alice Cronin

1944

(Ms. Phillimore)



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BY
WILHELMINA STITCH

AUTHOR OF
"SILKEN THREADS," ETC.

NEW YORK
E. P. DUTTON & CO., INC.

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COBWEBS AND DEWDROPS

IN the crevice of my heart, in the corner of my mind, when the day is at its start, oft a cobweb there I find. Nasty cobweb, catching dust; ugly cobweb, dull and grey. Get a broom, of course I must! Sweep the horrid thing away. Spun by worry overnight, threads of fretting, threads of care; to the crevice it clings tight, growing bigger, I declare! Someone says a gentle thing, someone does a kindly deed. Lo! my heart begins to sing; from a weight, my mind is freed. Where's the cobweb? Ah, behold! It is beautiful to see. Sparkles with the dawn's pale gold; lacey, glistening, filigree. Just as silver drops of dew beautify the web's dull grey, so the kindly things we do, all the loving things we say, may to someone's cobweb cling—and make of it a lovely thing.

SEND FORTH YOUR SHIPS

TO wait quite patiently is good, but this I've always understood—when longing for your ship's return, 'tis just as well this truth to learn: no ship returns—be not in doubt—if you have failed to send one out! And then—for fear there blows a gale and your small barque should prove too frail, when boisterous waves roll mountain high, 'tis just as well this dodge to try—send forth more ships on life's wide seas, and one may catch a lucky breeze! One ship is not much good alone, it is a fleet we ought to own; a fleet of energy and will, of hope, good sense, and pluck and skill; of dreams and ideals, love and truth, built in life's yards by stalwart Youth. Then later we may sit and yearn to see these gallant ships return.

AFTER READING
JEREMY TAYLOR

JEREMY TAYLOR considers his losses. Everything gone! Well, not quite all. Sky and stars and moon and sun; fire and stream and waterfall; shadows when the day is done; dewdrops on the grassy lawn, brilliant flowers and shady trees, pearly tints at break of dawn; I am not deprived of these. "They are mine since time began," said Jeremy Taylor, thoughtful man! Jeremy Taylor considers his losses—"Wife have I who loves me much, tender friends who offer aid, gift of sight and sound and touch, conscience that is unafraid. Books to read and power to talk, time and will to meditate; neighbour's fields where I can walk. No one has a happier fate since the light of day began," said Jeremy Taylor, fortunate man!

THE HAPPIEST MAN

HE who can fall to sleep at night knowing he did his best by day, knowing he fought a goodly fight though naught was gained along the way. He who can nightly fall to rest at perfect peace with all mankind. He is indeed most truly blest, a happier man one could not find. We'll let the cynic sneer and jeer and scoff about a "poor reward." But this be true, when Love draws near, there is contentment at the board. Speak not of high success and wealth if also there be hate and spite. But has he friends and robust health—then may he soundly sleep at night. He who can say, when shadows fall, "I've done the very best I can. I bear no grudge nor big nor small, I did no ill to any man. I tried to prove myself of worth, and now that I may seek my rest, I am at peace with all on earth." Indeed, he is most truly blest.

A PRECIOUS GIFT

LILIES of the valley, fragrant, gleaming white (these my good friend brought me), and a crimson, dusky rose. Blossoms these for beauty, for intense and swift delight—petals drooped so wanly at the short day's close. Would that I could bring to you (thus my good friend said) flashing gems and precious stones and jewels beyond compare. Emeralds of Neptune's green and rubies glowing red; opals for a necklet and pearls to rope your hair. Just a thought, a precious thought (my good friend gave to me). The flowers, they had withered, and the gems he could not find. But the gracious thought it blossomed, became a fruitful tree, and its beauty was forever in my heart and in my mind. These were mine for ever, both lilies gleaming white, and jewels and fragrant roses, precious gifts from this good friend. For the thought it flashed with beauty and gave such deep delight throughout the day, the week, the year—until the long day's end.

A SWEEP'S PONY

CLIPPITY-CLOP, trit-trot, trit-trot. Swiftly he journeys down the street. Clippity-clop, trit-trot, trit-trot. Oh, sturdy pony, why so fleet? What makes you prance in that proud way, what makes you such a joyous thing? It is a damp and dreary day, to look at you it might be Spring! Was Exmoor forest once your home, with short sweet grass for your delight, and heathered hills and vales to roam, and streams that mirrored stars at night? Perhaps you're thinking of red deer that frisked about with you in play? One thing at least is very clear, you're filled with happiness to-day. The pride of you! As if you drew a kingly chariot, red and gold. Perhaps no one explained to you your cart is sooty, grimy, old? I hope that at your journey's end, whilst Master sweeps, with soot-grimed eyes, a child will prove a loving friend and bring you sugar for a prize.

A WORD OF PRAISE

DON'T be niggardly with praise; have enthusiastic ways! Silent thoughts no one can guess. If you like your friend's new dress with its pleasing comeliness, say so. Not good manners? How absurd! When the heart directs the word, when the impulse is sincere, do not stifle words of cheer. If you think your wife's a dear, say so. If you think your husband kind, do not push the thought behind. If you think he's just the best, no one like him, east or west, by his love you're truly blest—say so. Such a difference it can make—word of praise for someone's sake. When those who daily work for you, prove efficient, staunch, and true, and gratitude, you feel, is due—say so!

*TO A PERFECT HOST
AND HOSTESS*

NOW that I'm home again, good friends, this letter I desire to write, for when the actual visit ends, one shares in Memory's delight. You, smiling, met me at the door, and said, "We're glad that you are here." My shyness slithered to the floor—I felt your welcome was sincere. I felt you liked to harbour guests. You made all stiffness disappear, exchanged such friendly little jests that warmed the very atmosphere. And though I caused you extra work (Oh yes, I did, I realise!) you gave no hint you'd like to shirk, but showed me smiling lips and eyes. My comfort was your hourly care—a perfect bed, bright glowing fire. Such very appetising fare, just everything one could desire. My thanks for this—and this beside—that you allowed your guest to roam through Friendship's portals, opened wide, into the spirit of your home!

THY BROTHER'S BOAT

THERE was a day when winds blew high, and dark and sullen grew the sky. I lost my chart, my ship was frail; smashed was the mast and rent the sail. My courage waned, I grew afraid—unasked, a brother offered aid. Renounced his will, renounced his way, for sake of me that darksome day. Gave of his courage and his strength; guide was he for the journey's length. Lulled were the winds, the sun shone bright, gone were the terrors of the night. My courage soared, my chart was found, and lo! my ship then touched firm ground. Oh, sweet relief! I breathed again and Hope dispersed both fear and pain. Then when I turned to thank the friend who brought me to my journey's end, he waved his hand, and shook his head; these were the golden words he said: "First help thy brother's boat when tempests roar, and lo! thine own will also reach the shore."

AND SO TO BED

TO rise with gratitude, to find one's destined sphere, to feel that work is good, and hold it dear; to take life's winding road with laughter and with song, nor grumble at the load, though way be long. . . . To pluck a harmful weed and plant a blossom there, to see another's need, his burdens share; to laugh and joke a bit, to cherish one true friend, preserve a gentle wit unto the end. . . . To find in little things one's greatest happiness, the bird that sweetly sings, the wind's caress; to reach the Inn of Rest, and know the day has sped; to breathe, "I've done my best"—and so to bed.

ONE DAY AND ANOTHER

ONE day and another—wet and dry, cold and hot, sunny sky, rains a lot; fog and mist, raw and chill, then a day so soft and still. Boisterous wind, gentle breeze, moon entangled in the trees; sleet and hail, frost and snow, then a haze of golden glow. Taking all these days together, every type and style of weather, not so bad, we must admit, come now, brother, smile a bit! One day and another—trouble looms, work goes wrong; trouble clears, life's a song! Cause for grief, somewhat sad; comes relief, once more glad. One friend fails us, others aid; let clouds gather—unafraid. Business bad; world of sorrow; business better on the morrow. A little pain, a lot of joy, even gold has its alloy. Taking all these days together, every type and style of weather, not so bad, we must admit. Come now, brother, smile a bit!

TO ONE ABOUT TO EMIGRATE

YOUR Great Adventure starts to-day, and may all good attend you, lad. You're sailing soon, so far away, the folk who love you must feel sad. But you will smile, hold high your head and face the future without dread. It is a wrench to leave behind your country, relatives, and friends; but think of what you're going to find when this important journey ends—a land of courage and of hope, within the Empire's mighty scope. You've marked your goal; you're sure you'll win; you are enthralled by this new quest! A Great Adventure should begin with just such energy and zest. May all your golden dreams come true—this is our wish, to-day, for you. Our pray'rs for you are like the birds that follow in the ship's white wake; straight from the heart the strong-winged words rise and go forth for your youth's sake: "May God Himself, the Pilot, be guiding you safely o'er Life's sea."

THE HOURS

THE Hours go by, some poet said,
the Hours go by on sandalled
feet; from golden dawn to sunset red,
the Hours go swiftly down the street.
And each Hour has a nun-like face, a
gentle face with kindly eyes; and each
Hour has such charming grace, and each
is serviceful and wise. But some of us
are blind to see, and some of us are deaf
to hear. We find each Hour a misery;
each day a yellow leaf and sear. We notice
scowls where there are smiles, because
our eyes are filled with gloom. And
should we walk a hundred miles, we'd
never see a flow'r in bloom! The
Hours have hands both soft and white,
and gifts for one and all to hold; they
proffer joy and great delight, and dreams
quite worth their weight in gold. The
Hours dance down the Year's long street,
and sing a tender roundelay, rejoicing
that they soon will greet the Star that
heralds Christmas Day.

LONG AGO

I WAS once—oh! long ago—made of fleecy clouds and snow. Then a fairy queen was I whose palaces were in the sky. By day I visited the flowers and brought them warm and sunny hours. I brought the dew, I brought the rain, I painted gold the farmer's grain. I painted robin's breast bright red, and in the clouds I went to bed. A little snowman once was I, who did not fidget, fuss, or cry. This magic-me (now did you guess?) was but a child without a dress; was but a child—around her neck a snowy towel without a speck! Right o'er a basin she did lean. "I'll make your hair so nice and clean," said mother as she stirred the soap, and in and out the curls did grope. Then while I kept my eyes shut tight, my mother said for my delight: "Your curls are fleecy clouds, my child." Beneath the soap and wet, I smiled.

THREE POINTS OF VIEW

S AID Idleness, "Life is too long; the hours drag by on leaden feet. I'm tired of laughter, tired of song, of country lane and city street. I'm tired of wondering what to do with all the time I have to spend. Could I but lose an hour or two and hasten thus the day's dull end!" Said Industry, "Life is too short; the hours fly past on magic wings. I have no time at all to court self-pity and such futile things! There are so many tasks to do within the span of one small day; could I but add an hour or two, and thus keep night a while at bay!" Said Service, "It is wrong to speak of life as if it were Time's fool, to measure it by day and week like some dull sum one does at school. My life is rich beyond all measure; no talk of shortness or of length, since I (said Service) find most pleasure in giving daily of my strength."

MEDITATION

“**T**HY Kingdom come, on earth”. . . .

What Kingdom, Lord? There must be peace and mirth, no hurtful sword within Thy Kingdom, Lord. And gentle-tongued must all Thy angels be; so kindly helpful one unto the other. And tolerance and sympathy bind close each angel brother. And cruelty must be abhorred within Thy Kingdom, Lord. Near Thee, no petty jealousies abide, no fear can live within Thy Sight. Thy Name is ever glorified by angel voices day and night. All understand the meaning of Thy Word within Thy Kingdom, Lord. Then may Thy Kingdom come, ere it grow late. We have much need to rid ourselves of fears, and cleanse ourselves of selfishness and hate, and learn to wipe away another's tears and bring Thy Spirit to the daily board—Thy Kingdom come on earth . . . O Lord.

SPRING FASHIONS

CLOURS this spring? All the delicate hues! Palest of green and the purest of white. Faintest of purple and clearest of blues, pink of the sunrise and gold of dawn's light. 'Twas Daffy-down-dilly who gave me the news—showed me her frock, pale yellow and gold; showed me the blue that scilla bells choose; whispered, "Miss Wild Pear's too sweet to behold!" "Pink and white is her frock," said Daffy-down-dilly, "My dear! So exquisite in colour and line. Wild Cherry wears white like sea foam, all frilly. A purple creation is also quite fine." "'Twas chosen by Iris, a beautiful creature, whilst Pimpernel's scarlet is certainly smart. The yellow of primrose is this season's feature," said Daffy-down-dilly, the queen of my heart.

IDEAL HOMES

BEHOLD! no hands have laboured here, naught but the spirit, year by year, from early youth. A palace where the soul may roam; temple to Joy, an ideal home, founded on Truth. Behold this house. It has been wrought of fairy fancy, beauteous thought, and Hope most fair. The lantern, Memory, is bright, and flashes through the darksome night, atop the stair. And here a fabric richly gleams, woven of iridescent dreams, and hangs with grace. Echoes of Courage fill this hall; remembrances like blessings fall upon this place. This house stands firm though storms may blow, nor care nor trouble lay it low, however dire. Built without hands, a home for rest, with Peace the hostess, Joy the guest—and Love the fire.

EARLY SPRING AT KEW

THEY made one catch one's breath —the scilla bells. Blue carpets at the feet of kingly trees. And such exciting, sweet, and pungent smells that wafted to us on the balmy breeze from graceful reeds that whispered in Chinese! A host of purple crocuses were mine! Whilst you, my son, preferred the waxy white. Branches were bare, but each one bore the sign of leaves still folded neatly out of sight, like nestlings 'neath their mother's wing at night. Stray daffodils, like heralds on parade, turned their gold trumpets to the dazzling sun, which caught their spears and turned them into jade. A blackbird sang, then ceased, his song half done, as if to show such joy he were afraid. The rhododendrons blushed a vivid red. Promise of life and beauty everywhere. Did you, my son, hear what my heart's lips said? "Among these trees there is not one so fair as Youth who still has all his fruit to bear."

HANNAH, SEWING, MEDITATES

SOON will I break my bitter fast,
Our pilgrimage again draws near,
and I shall see my babe at last. He has
forgotten me, I fear—so many sunsets
in one year. A bitter fast! For what is
bread, or milk and honey palely gold,
when there's a small, dark, curly head
one longs against one's breast to hold—
a babe whom only dreams enfold? The
time of sacrifice draws nigh; oh, joyous
festival indeed! And will my baby boy
be shy? Of sacrifice there is no need,
since through the year a heart did bleed.
A mother's heart has passed through
fire! But now with joy I sew and sing,
for soon I'll have my great desire. Has he
grown tall, the little thing? What length
of coat will he require? My love has guided
me to guess the length and width his
coat should be. 'Tis finished now, oh
happiness! My precious son I soon shall
see—think you he has forgotten me?

CHRISTMASTIDE SHOPS

SHOPS are not merely shops December days, not marts where people hurry to and fro, intent upon their usual household ways, buying necessities, some quick, some slow. Shops are not merely shops this time of year. Oh, I could live within their walls till night. They have a special, joyous atmosphere, a magnetism drawing forth delight. Shops are not merely shops this time of year; they're temples to the spirit of Good Cheer. Such lovely windows, like wide, smiling eyes, with merchandise that gleams and shines and glows. So many folk inside, planning a glad surprise, while through the shop the tide of deep joy flows. December shops are happy meeting-places for Kindness, Thoughtfulness, and Gay-of-heart; for sparkling eyes and jolly, smiling faces; they are transformed, indeed, to Love's own mart. Shops are not merely shops but magic places, where charming thoughts peep out from silks and laces!

A WEATHER PLEA

SOME like the heat and some the cold, and some like rain and wind together! The young like snow, not so the old, yet all must bear each type of weather. To Him who holds the winds in check, then let us make this simple plea: may storms of passion never wreck the stalwart soul's serenity. May He unleash the winds of truth across the fields of thought to blow. Intolerance must die, forsooth, wherever truth is free to go. May He who makes the rain to fall, commands the stars, the moon and tide, send floods of gratitude to all, to open up the heart's gate, wide. And if one season we must weep, then send us tears that heal like rain, and fall upon a seed asleep which blossoms forth as joy again. We will not ask for perfect weather—a gust of laughter for a start, then face the storm and calm together, with merry sunshine in the heart.

TO-DAY

WHEN a person sits a-fretting for troubles that are past; sits a-fretting and forgetting that troubles do not last; sits a-grieving and a-groaning for the burden and the pain; sits a-wailing and a-moaning lest the sorrow come again—— Someone knocks and walks right in, says: "Excuse me, it's a sin for any proper person to sit and brood this way. I'm the only thing that matters—all the rest's not worth a pin, I'm a living, pulsing creature—I'm To-day." When a person cries, "I'm fearful for To-morrow's unknown sorrows; very worried and quite tearful lest a grievous trouble follows"; when a person sits despairing because the future's dark, sits blind and all uncaring of Hope's persistent spark—— Someone knocks and walks right in, says: "Excuse me, it's a sin for any proper person to sit and brood this way. So I beg you leave your sorrow of the Yesterday and Morrow, and embrace the blessings offered by To-day."

HAPPY ARE THEY

THEY who have work for hand and for head, tasks to accomplish by nightfall each day, labour for roof and labour for bread, happy are they. Happy are they, whatever their sphere, whose work is fulfilling a definite need; find pride in their work and cause for good cheer, happy, indeed. Happy are they on whom there depends the aged for succour, for guidance the youth; who give of themselves to stranger and friend, happy in truth. They who have hearts that Time cannot age, who toil in life's fields with this for the prize: beauty for harvest and dreams for their wage—are happily wise. They who rejoice in the hills they must climb, and seek the ideal though hard be the way, with courage that strengthens as lengthens the Time—happy are they!

THOUGHTS WHEN OFF TO WORK

THE same old route, the same hour, too; the same old job at the journey's end. But oh! I'm glad I've work to do, for labour is ever man's greatest friend. Grateful am I that I have health to accomplish the task that the day may bring; perfect digestion is better than wealth—off to work, let's whistle or sing. Nice to think as I step along a job is awaiting my hands and brain! It's my look-out if this work goes wrong, whatever the weather, come shine or rain! The same old job! Important? No. But still, it's a cog in the scheme of things, and pride in this cog makes my spirit glow, and bears me along with the speed of wings! A few minutes more and I shall see my own little job, with its merry face, patiently, trustfully, waiting for me—at the very same hour, in the very same place.

THE SCHOOL CROCODILE

TWENTY sailor hats of straw, shading twenty pairs of eyes. Twenty little laughing maids, somewhat varying in size. Some are broader, just a bit, those behind are not so tall. Twenty pairs of walking-shoes, low-heeled, strapped, and neat withal. Twenty little knee-length skirts, all of them of navy blue. Twenty blazers all alike, hard, indeed, to tell who's who! Twenty badges, proudly worn, each above a little heart. Ribbons in their hats to match—uniforms are very smart! Twenty looking much alike, yet not one is quite the same; different coloured hair and eyes, different age and different name. Different thoughts and different dreams, clothed in just the self-same style. Varied temperaments and gifts—making up this crocodile!

THE FRIENDLY PHILOSOPHY

THOUGH things may go from bad to worse, or this may seem to be the case, we still can't change the Universe, we can but show a smiling face. We have but time for our own work, a trivial job for our short span; though small it seem, we must not shirk—for fear we mar Life's larger plan. It is my duty, thus he said, to look up often at the trees, and greet the smiling sun o'erhead, and greet the gentle summer breeze; and look up often at the sky until its peace enwrap my soul, to watch the fluffy clouds sail by and feel that beauty is Life's goal. To look up often at the hills, and listen for the still, small voice. To love the brooklets, streams, and rills, in Mother Nature to rejoice. Ah! gentle writer, I love best this golden phrase from your wise pen, a fitting crown to all the rest—"I must be friendly with all men."

COLUMBUS SAID, "GO ON!"

UNCHARTED seas! No goal in sight. (There is no torture like Fear's rack!) On, on they sailed, by day, by night, till each man cried in fear, "Turn back!" Columbus said, "Go on!" Now let the soul Columbus be, as on and on through life we sail, across a wide expanse of sea, so filled with dread that we may fail, and facing always the unknown, companioned daily by despair. Yet shall we not be quite alone; the soul's Columbus will be there, to cry aloud, "Go on!" To-morrow lies before us all; a continent, ours to explore. The soul must, like Columbus, call, "You've left for ever Failure's shore—look forward and go on." My barque is frail. I'm tempest-tost. Oh! soul now like Columbus, cry. "There's light ahead; all is not lost! Behold the land of Hope draws nigh—and you must still go on."

TO DECEMBER

FOOLISH to paint you like a man grown old, with sad, dimmed eyes, and wrinkled, pallid face. You who are rosy-checked, and gay and bold, so pleased with Brother Wind to run a race. How can we thank you for the gifts you bring, the dark-green trees, the waxy mistletoe, and gentle carols for the young to sing, and holly with its berries all aglow? Excited feelings bubbling in the heart, delicious secrets hiding in the breast, such charming plans will suddenly upstart when you, December, are earth's precious guest. There is no month, December, just like you, for finding wells of goodness we thought dry. You touch some heart, the springs gush forth anew to swell the streams of love as they flow by. It is for this we love you most, I ween; that you are ever calling forth the best that lies within the human heart, unseen, till you become good Mother Earth's sweet guest.

NEIGHBOURS

YOU ask, "Who are my neighbours?" We haven't met as yet, know nothing of their forbears. Their name? It's—I forget. Their birthplace doesn't matter, their religion, sect, or creed, they're neighbours—that's the only point I have just now to heed. For neighbours are just human, so much like you and me—perhaps I'd better ask them if they'd like a cup of tea. You ask, "Who are my neighbours?" Well, they're very much like you, with hopes and fears and precious dreams and quite a lot to do. They joke a bit and laugh a bit, and work and play and sleep. They've reason to be happy and sometimes cause to weep. I know this much about them; like me they strive and plan, and clearly it's my duty to help them if I can. You ask who are my neighbours. Can't tell you any more. I'll just run in and say to them: "I'm glad you live next door."

LIFE'S TAPESTRY

THE tapestry of human life! Ragged in places and threadbare, and torn by viciousness and strife, and drained of colour by despair, and yet withal exceeding fair. So easy to detect a place in which there is a broken thread. A stitch of kindness, worked with grace; or stitch of cheerfulness, bright red, would, in that bare spot, do instead. Then why exclaim, "Ah, look, how worn, how ugly and how drab of hue!" When-e'er life's tapestry is torn then there is work for us to do with threads of gay and buoyant hue. Let's mend the holes with utmost care, and neatly stitch unravelled seams, and place some bright embroidery there, wrought with gold laughter, rosy dreams, and silver hope that richly gleams.

WHENCE ALL THE NOISE?

O WORLD! You are so noisy in your daily toil. And yet the Dawn is silent, and the moon. The grasses springing from the patient soil are silent too, and lo! the sun at noon, the little stars at night—they sing no tune. They make no sound as each pursues its quest. There is no hate in all the heavenly spheres, no wrath within time's understanding breast as he goes striding down the winding years, no hate, nor wrath, nor turbulent unrest. Then whence this noise, the clamour of the day, and whence the streams of wrath and fumes of hate retarding progress on life's upward way? O noisy tumult, when will you abate, and give to peace her rightful, queenly sway? We are the noise. 'Tis we alone who make so great a fuss o'er everything we do. Behold! the sun has set. The Dawn is now awake. In perfect silence fell the glistening dew Oh, Mother Nature, let us be as you.

TO A THIRTEENTH- CENTURY POET

“**W**YNTER wakeneth al my care.”
Foolish poet to despair just
because the trees are bare and the sky
is bleak and grey. Knew you not that
He would make all the sleeping buds
to wake, and would roll the clouds away?
Poet of the long ago, did you at’ your
day’s end know ’twas but foolishness
to show sorrow at the falling leaf? Did
you learn this happy truth e’er old age
usurped your youth, Hope is Winter’s
child, forsooth; Winter is no time for grief?
Let the leaves waft slowly down; branches
that are bare and brown soon will wear
a new green gown. Did you, poet, live
to learn? Live to learn that Winter’s
pain is soon healed by sun and rain, and
care-worn heart knows joy again, when
daffodils return?

THOUGHTS FAR AFIELD

WHY so joyous, City-pent, why so joyous? I can see through my mind's eye stretch of green and blue of sky, and a hollow that I know, all aglow, just all aglow, with crocus cups of purple and of gold. And with stars the banks are strewn, palest yellow, like the moon; now I pluck them, lots and lots, clustered round black chimney-pots! And I place them in my basket woven richly of my dreams, in my rainbow-tinted basket that with starshine gleams and gleams. For the city cannot hold me when the countryside clasps Spring, nor city cares enfold me when the scilla bells all ring. I may walk a city pavement, I may board a city train, but my eyes caress the daffodils in Cornwall once again!

JUST HUMAN NATURE

OH, it's naught but human nature
in our dear old human race, that
makes folk very lovable, it's not the
brain nor face; it's not the style nor
figure, the abilities or such, it's just
their human nature, the tender human
touch. The thing I find the nicest in all
the folk I meet in countryside or city,
in park or busy street, is the wealth
of human nature that we humans all
conceal. It really is astonishing how
much alike we feel! For parents talk
of children, and each possess the best.
And we all have fears and sorrows
a-hiding in the breast. And we've dreams
and great ambitions, and we pray for
sunny weather. Oh, I love this human
nature that binds us all together!

THE PARK'S PAPER-MAN

HE stabs the papers as he passes. He sees them in the longest grasses; he sees the tiniest little bit and makes a vicious jab at it, and lifts it up, and drops it down into his basket old and brown. It seems to me he does not care what messages he casts in there. A piece of paper—then one knows into his basket it soon goes. He never looks, I'm sure, to see if there should be true poesy upon the paper he has captured—a song of love by one enraptured! But now I beg you, paper-man, be as careful as you can. For Spring is here, and at this time so many people write a rhyme, and should one, wafted by the breeze, be left to lie beneath the trees—Oh, pray, your callous fork restrain, don't pierce a hole through love's refrain! And, furthermore, remember, do—small, tender blades are pushing through; and squirrels gambol here and there; your fork is sharp, good man, beware!

USE THE STAIRS

YOU know that heated feeling, that angry, cheated feeling, when you see "This lift's not working; use the stair." You stutter and you grumble, you mutter and you mumble, and at that lift, not working, frown and glare. But soon you take to mounting (so futile to be counting) the scores of steps that lead you to the top. And you're thankful and surprised when 'tis fully realised your journey's at an end and you may stop. 'Tis then this thought comes straying, and you find yourself a-saying, "It wasn't such a nuisance, after all." Next time Success is crying, "Come on, now, take to flying," and you find your wings are weakly, or too small—then take to stepping slowly, in a manner sure and lowly (when wings are out of order, use the stair!). You never need be tearful, despondent, hopeless, fearful, just use the stairway slowly—you'll get there!

THE DREAMERS

COME now, let's talk about this thing called Life. No one with eyes and ears and heart and mind would call it wholly kind. No honest soul exists who's deaf and dumb and blind to all the bitter signs of ugliness and strife that mar this beautiful thing, this precious Life. But yet, so are we made, we still may cling to dreams, brush shoulders with the Wrong, yet know that Right prevails, and see beyond the cesspools, silver streams; look in Hate's eyes, and say, "Love never fails," believing Life far sweeter than it seems. Oh, give us always dreamers, else we perish. For those that see the murk, yet seek the light, have ideals that with all their strength they cherish; ideals that will, like Dawn, dispel the night, putting the grim realities to flight. Oh, give us always dreamers in our day, for they will never rest until, forsooth, their gentle dreams have changed, not passed away, but, by their acts, transmuted into Truth.

FLOWERS BY RADIO

THEN through the ether: "Don't delay to plant your antirrhinum seeds." To right, to left, this side, that way, I see no soil, nor grass nor weeds. But just a desk and pens and ink, and lots of paper wanly white. (I love snapdragons, salmon pink, and those like flame give keen delight.) "If sown this week" (how clear the voice!) "your plants will have both height and strength. Their flowers will make your heart rejoice throughout the summer's radiant length." What though my feet on carpet tread and I'm enclosed by office walls. I seek my antirrhinum bed, a friendly blackbird sweetly calls. I touch the earth, I smell the soil, the rain brings forth exotic scent. Beneath a springtime sun I toil, I sow my seeds and am content. I watch my plants grow tall and strong, their blossoms will be bright and gay throughout the summer season long. "Sow antirrhinum seeds to-day."

JANUARY MALE CHOIR

THE robin and the wren are singing now together. The robin is a Spartan, the wren likes brighter weather. But now they sing a duet, and the burden of their song is, "Happy! happy! happy!" for Springtime won't be long! The missel-thrush is singing; what cares he for the rain? In a storm he sings but louder: "Dear earth, be glad again." The throstle sings each morning, "Oh, sleepy-heads arise! Fair Spring is tripping o'er the hill with laughter in her eyes." "Tinker, tinker, tinker!" Thus trills the quaint great tit. The skylark joins these choristers, "Spring's coming, think of it!" Dear birds, we do salute you; you did not fly away, but braved the English winter to help us through the day.

THE "SHUT-INS."

THERE is a noble company (whom you admire and I). Alas! They cannot walk abroad, a ceiling is their sky. They never race the haughty wind nor breathe the hill-top air, nor mix they with their human-kind on busy thoroughfare. The "God of furred and feathered things" has given them instead some window-flowers, bright curtainings, four walls, and silent bed; a patterned carpet for a lawn (no dewdrops sparkle there), but they converse with sister Dawn; with stars their secrets share. Their gardens grow upon their walls, in stately groups and rows; and how they prune and water them—ask Brother Sun, he knows. God bless this noble company that yet can smile and sing despite the pang of envy—of the bird upon the wing.

CONFESSION

I HAVE no answer for the folk who ask, "What think you of the life beyond the veil?" I only know there is to-day's great task—in it I must not fail. A task concerned with living, not with dying. To fill this precious day unto its brim with usefulness and joyousness, not sighing—then offer it to Him. I have no answer for the folk who say, "Put into words your creed, your true belief." For I am quite absorbed with this one day, woven of joy and grief. I only know that I have faith enough, and courage for the burdens day may bring. And should I stumble where the way is rough—to Hope, my staff, I'll cling. I never wonder whither I shall wend; I'm certain of my duty on this earth. To work with honour, be a loyal friend—and sow one seed of worth.

FINDING THE KEY

WHO has not tried a certain key, to find it does not fit at all? Another one, then two, then three—they're all too large or else too small. Either too thick or else too thin—in desperation you decide to smash the silly trunk right in; when lo! at last it opens wide. You tried a lot, at least a score, each key upon the little ring; and when there was but one key more—it proved to be the very thing! It turned the lock, so smoothly, too, without a creak, without a jerk, as if it wished to say to you, "'Tis often thus in your life's work." You find a certain door locked fast, but through that door you have to go if you're to win the goal at last. Which key will fit? You do not know. Try this, try that, and don't despair! You'll find the very key to fit. Now look. There's still one hanging there. What's that you say? Hurrah! 'Tis It.

THE MERRY HEART

“**A** MERRY heart goes twice the way.” Come, then, let’s sing a merry song, for night will soon absorb the day, and lo! the journey is quite long, and sad hearts tire, so I’ve heard say—we want not feeble hearts, but strong. Come, then, let’s sing a merry tune, and let us smile a merry smile, and then we’ll find by afternoon we’ve journeyed half the day’s long mile. A merry heart is life’s great boon, and makes the drabbest day worth while. Now, since we have quite far to go, and there are many hills to climb and roads are difficult and slow, we’d better sing a happy rhyme, for merry hearts, we all do know, can cross a bridge in half the time. A merry heart is like a staff—we need a staff as on we wend—a merry heart will sing and laugh whene’er there is a bad, sharp bend. It cuts the journey right in half and finds that joy waits at the end.

TO A FAIR MAID OF FEBRUARY

TOUCHED by a Snowdrop into tenderness; touched by a Snowdrop into sudden joy! First sight of you is like a swift caress; the happiness you give has no alloy. You do not stir to passion like a rose. You are our childhood sweetly come again, wearing a frock white as the winter snows 'neath which your fair fragility has lain.

Lovely you are when, like an ivory bead, your head hangs shyly from its stem of green. But when your skirts are spread, ah! then indeed you are the daintiest thing the world has seen. That touch of green upon your scalloped dress! It brings a throb of joy, a rush of tears. Touched by a Snowdrop into tenderness—a memory to beautify the years.

THE STRAY CAT

MEOW! Meow! They pushed me out, they pushed me out and slammed the door. I still can hear their angry shout, "Be off! We warned you once before." Is there no home on this long street? I do so love a bright warm fire, a drop of milk, and bite of meat—this be the sum of my desire. And now I'm walking in the rain. I'm hungry and I'm very cold. Ah! there's that nasty dog again, I'll try to look quite fierce and bold. He shall not even see my fear, nor know my heart is thumping fast. What kind of 'people live in here? Perhaps I've found a home at last. How cold the basement steps to-night! Oh, scrumptious smell of hot, fried fish. The kitchen stove is burning bright, there's cook a-polishing a dish. Meow! meow! oh, cook, be kind! My heart is going pit-a-pat. Open the door and peer behind—and smile upon a small stray cat.

FOR LITTLE PAGES

I HOPE all little pages, whose buttoned suits are tight, whose collars almost reach their ears, so small in stature, young in years, who act with such precision, who always do what's right, I hope these little pages can sometimes have a fight. I hope they lose their buttons, and burst their lordly seams, and go a-fishing sometimes, if it's only in their dreams. I hope all little pages at whom we smile and stare, who run about so gaily, who work for hours, and daily, have a little time to spare. An hour or two to whistle like a merry butcher lad, to whistle and to hum a bit, because the season's glad. I don't mind when it's winter to see them buttoned tight, but somehow in the springtime—it doesn't seem quite right. For in those skin-tight trousers, I'm sure they cannot bend to play a game of leap-frog with another buttoned friend.

STEP BY STEP

THINK not of the year ahead; think not of the journey's length. Rather take this thought instead: "For the day I have the strength." Years have months and months have weeks; weeks their days and days their hours. Life is varied—dales and peaks; arid places, lovely flow'rs. Need not strive to see the end; hours have minutes for our aid. Step by step, then round the bend—a portion of the journey's made. Down a valley, up a hill; patience brings the goal in sight. Courage and unswerving will crowns with victory the fight. Foolish trying hard to peer down the path that's just begun. Better far this song of cheer: "Strength have I till set of sun." Months and weeks, and lo! the day. Then the hour for each new load. Thus can we without dismay face each mile of Life's long road.

LAMBKIN LULLABY

ANGELS guard all lambs to-night!
Wind, lie still against the hill;
gentle moon and stars, shine bright;
little lambs, bleat not in fright, little
lambkins, do not cry—watchful shepherds
stand close by. Soon the dawn will reach
the hill; woolly lambkins, rest, lie still.
Hush-a-by, lullaby, lambkin, why weep?
My arms are the fold to keep out the
cold. Hush-a-by, lullaby, lambkin, now
sleep. My heart is a shepherd to guard
you from ill. My lamb in a shawl, rest
now and lie still. Angels guard all lambs
to-night, lambs upon the hills of life.
Gentle moon and stars shine bright,
hold in leash the winds of strife. Little
lambkins, have no fear, God, the Shepherd,
stands quite near. Hush-a-by, lullaby,
lambkin, why weep? My arms are the
fold to keep out the cold. Hush-a-by,
lullaby, lambkin, now sleep. My heart is a
shepherd to guard you from ill. My lamb
in a shawl, rest now and lie still.

TOYS HE LEFT BEHIND HIM

STILL in the parks, where little children play, we have sweet proof that Santa Claus was good! For we observe the toys in proud array—a prancing steed of shining, dappled wood, a model omnibus conveyed by string, clutched tightly in a wool-clad elfin's hand. A "tank" that has a strong and boy-proof spring, and slowly moves across the squirrels' land. Bright coloured balls roll o'er the faded grass, while babies gurgle in surprised delight. I love to loiter, watch the children pass, sweet blossoms they, when flowers are not in sight. O splendid pram! O pride personified! Sweet six-year-old with eyes and cheeks aglow, walking demurely by her Nannie's side, pushing her doll, and crooning sweet and low. And here and there are fairy-folk on wheels, racing the wind, seeking the rainbow's end, while at a schoolboy's proudly conscious heels there trots a dog, his new, but perfect friend.

EARLY MORNING FACES

THERE'S something very beautiful and something sadly gay about the rush of faces in the morning of the day. They come, these men and women, the old ones and the young, and some stride by in silence, some wag a merry tongue. And each one has a different look—round about the eyes; some wistful, tired, or eager, and some are sadly wise. And each one has a different way of carrying his head, and some go forth with courage and some go forth with dread. And some are laughing gaily because the day's begun, and some are hampered with the thought, "When will this day be done?" There's something very touching and something sadly gay about the rush of faces in the morning of the day. And there's something very precious in a stranger's merry smile if one can quickly capture it, and keep it for a while!

A FRIEND

YOU have found me weak, when you thought me strong; and not always meek and quite often wrong, and sometimes in doubt which way I should wend. You have found me out—and yet are my friend! My failings you've seen, my failures and fears; the little I glean from the harvest of years. You've seen my feet slip on that path I have taken, lose my foothold and grip—but your faith was not shaken. Because you are you, my faults you can see, my weaknesses, too—and yet care for me. And this will endure till my story's quiet end. Of this I am sure—for you are my friend.

APRIL! APRIL!

APRIL! April! how does your garden grow? With daffodils and flashing squills and apple-trees all in a row. The daffodils are like the sun, the squills from bright blue skies are spun, and there is joy for everyone when apple blossoms glow. April! April! how does your garden grow? With lambkins white, oh gay, sweet sight! And little pink pigs in a row. The lambs are prettier than a song; such curly tails to pigs belong! The fluffy chickens grow quite strong when black-thorn blossoms show. April! April! how does your garden grow? With Lady Smocks and Goldilocks, and Forget-me-nots all in a row. The blackbirds and the mavis sing, the tiny tits to thorn-boughs cling; oh! there is joy in everything when April breezes blow!

*FOR A GIRL ON HER
21st BIRTHDAY*

LET us weave a roundelay, she
Is twenty-one to-day. Happy girl,
glorious age ! Let her claim her heritage.
She is Mother Nature's heir to great
beauty everywhere. This her golden
legacy—budding plant and leafing tree,
sky and sea and flow'ring field; all the
wisdom books can yield, music for her
rich delight, stars to give her peace at
night. Girl-Just-Twenty-One-To-day, go
you blithely on your way. When the
road is rough and long, sing you then a
merry song. Look with courage in Life's
eyes, never shirk high enterprise. Pain
you'll know and grief you'll know;
shadows come and tears may flow; be
you but with courage girt, laughter then
will heal a hurt, joy will greet you
on your way—Girl-Just-Twenty-One-To-
day.

A MOTHER SINGS

ROCK-A-BYE, baby. Hush! quiet as
a mouse. So many pretty things
in this pretty house. Silhouettes and
etchings, china and old lace—but nought
is so lovely as your rosebud face. Rock-a-
bye, baby. Hush! quiet as a mouse. So
many old things in this ancient house.
Furniture with spindle legs, carved and
oaken chest. Everything weighed down
with years—but you upon my breast.
Rock-a-bye, baby. Hush! quiet as a
mouse. Precious things are gathered
here, in this precious house. Pictures by
Old Masters, glassware that rings true.
But nothing half so precious as little,
quite-new You.

AN OLD GREY WALL

AN old grey garden wall! A hundred years and more since it was built. Starshine and moonshine nightly on it fall; and there the sun's rich gold is spilt. It has watched robins bathing on the lawn; has had hot cheeks cooled by the summer rain; has been the first to welcome rosy dawn; a resting-place for shadows at the day's wane. Children have pressed against its quiet grey breast, confiding the great secret of their height! And truant schoolboys whispered this bequest, "Hide us, oh wall, till father's out of sight." Inanimate we call this old grey wall which throbs with life, whose very stones do sing! For purple aubretia in cascades doth fall, and golden alyssum, from this old grey wall, in glorious profusion proclaims that it is Spring.

A MOTHER'S PRAYER IN SPRING

THOU, who hast taught the smallest bird to build a perfect little nest, grant that my plea may now be heard; I, too, would fashion for the best. 'Tis nesting-time; and I can see with what perfection Thy birds build. Then help me with my masonry, that Thy great purpose be fulfilled. My tiny feathered sister knows by instinct what she ought to do. In her small heart rich wisdom grows, her mothercraft is sure and true. 'Tis nesting-time. I, too, would make our home a safe and lovely place. Then teach me how, for Thine own sake, to build with truth and by love's grace. Bless Thou my hands with household ways; help me to plan and build aright. Teach us, like birds, to sing Thy praise within this house from dawn till night

TO A NEW YEAR

LITTLE New Year, still so young,
grant me gentleness of tongue;
grant the gift so I may speak strength-
ening words to hearts grown weak. Year
so newly in the land, grant me power of
healing hand; give me hands from which
may fall gifts of service, great and small.
Give me feet that bravely tread even
where Despair has led. Give me body
strong enough to face Life's winds,
however rough. Shoulders broad I would
possess to bear another's deep distress.
Year, so newly in the land, give me
heart to understand troubles other folk
do bear—understanding, I can share.
Year, so newly on the scene, 'mid your
beauties let me glean. Sounds of beauty
let me hear; keep my soul from craven
fear. Year, so newly in the land, hold
me, gently, by the hand.

LADY OF FASHION

MY Lady always is in style, no matter what the season be, for most enchanting is the smile my Lady wears for me. She dresses so exquisitely in folds of graciousness that gleam, in folds of clinging sympathy; and next her heart she pins a dream! Like sunshine is her beaming smile. My Lady always is in style. 'Tis much admired, my Lady's dress. No matter what the season be, she wears a robe of gentleness whose hem is elfin stitchery! She's shod to walk Love's winding ways, her hands are shaped to let gifts fall, her lips are curved to speak sweet praise, there is no fault in her at all. My Lady always is in style, no matter what the season be, for most enchanting is the smile she always wears for me!

MOTHER TIME

AH! gentle Time, what lovely things you do! You grace with lichens the decaying tree, and beautify with ivy the old wall, and give to rocks a grace and symmetry, and on neglected graves let daisies fall, like stars that have escaped the vault of blue. We are your children; you, the Mother wise, watching us tear the fabric of our days; marring with folly's shears the stuff of life, spoiling the pattern in a thousand ways, giving ourselves to ugliness and strife beneath your sad and understanding eyes. Ah! gentle Time, what lovely things you do! Just like a mother, you delight to sew, weaving fresh garments for tired souls to wear, mending and patching where frayed edges show; you surely close the rent of our despair, and hearts are healed of pain and grief by you.



